

**Top Secret**

(72)



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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

## MEMORANDUM

### *The Situation in Vietnam*

**Top Secret**

28 November 1966

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Poor weather continues to hamper ground and air operations in northern portions of South Vietnam.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Only light contact has been reported as bad weather continues to hamper allied air and ground operations in the northern half of the country (Para. 1). Six enemy soldiers were killed in scattered actions in Operation PAUL REVERE IV in the central highlands (Paras. 2-3). A total of 17 Viet Cong were killed on 28 November in coastal Binh Dinh Province by US troops of Operation THAYER II (Para. 4). Viet Cong guerrillas ambushed an ARVN truck convoy near Da Lat for the second time in a week (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

The Constituent Assembly on 28 November held an inconclusive debate on individual rights and duties to be included in the constitution (Para. 1).

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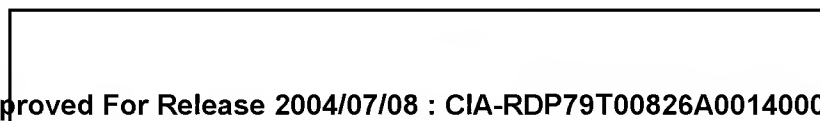
IV. Other Communist Military Developments:

There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments:

A detailed discussion of the merits of guerrilla warfare over tactics has been publicized widely by the Vietnamese Communists (Paras. 1-4).

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ANNEX

The Situation in Long An Province:

The possible deployment of US troops to the delta area of South Vietnam has been under consideration for some time. In order to test the feasibility of such a move and to explore some of the problems which might be encountered in delta operations, a US combat battalion was sent to Long An Province in September. [REDACTED]

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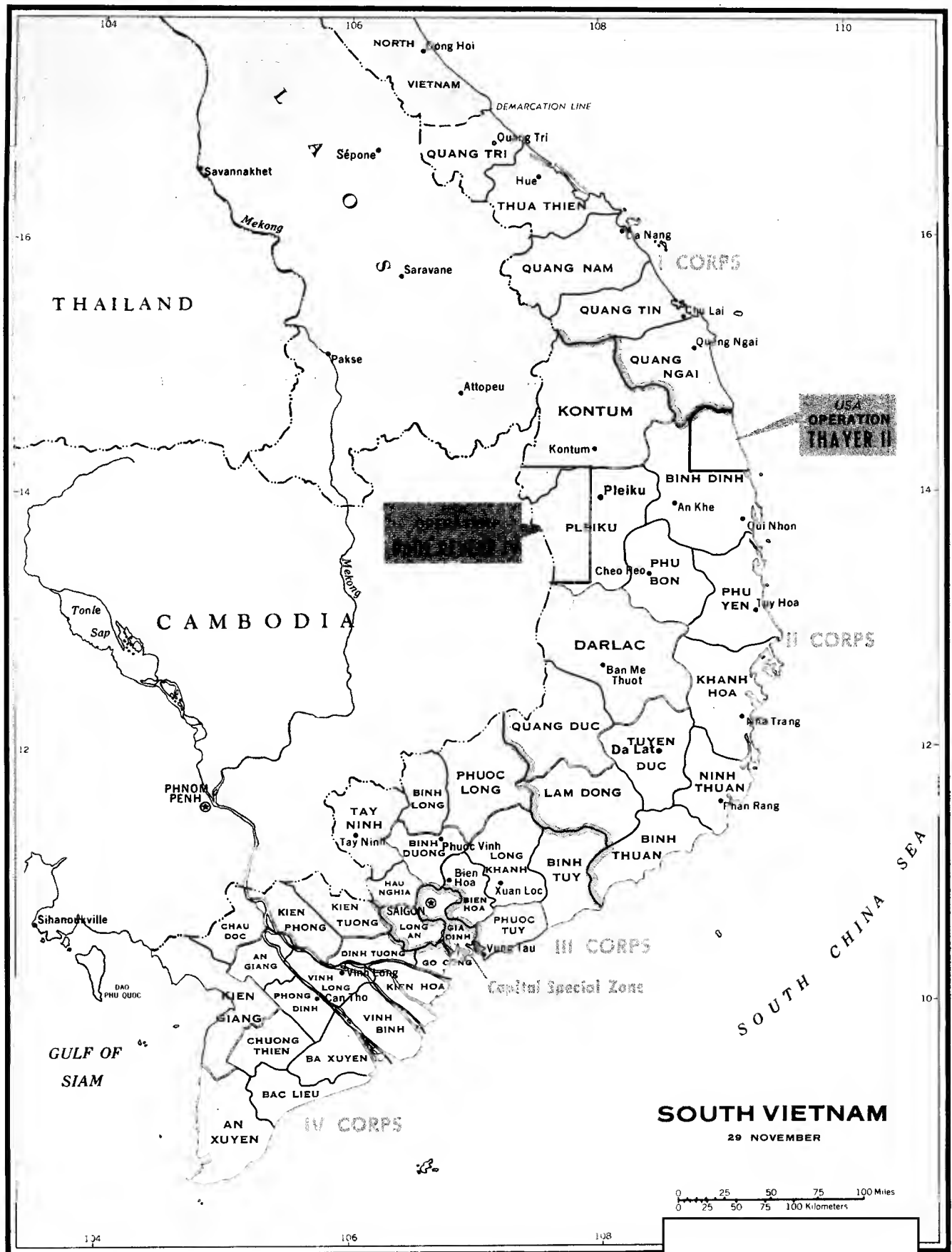
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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Only light, sporadic contact with Communist forces has been reported. Bad weather continues to hamper allied air and ground operations in the northern half of the country.

2. One company of the US 25th Infantry Division taking part in the nine-battalion Operation PAUL REVERE IV engaged a Communist force of unknown size early on 29 November in southwestern Kontum Province. Six enemy soldiers were killed in a ten-minute battle. No friendly casualties were reported.

3. Two US brigade command posts 25 miles west of Pleiku city in Pleiku Province were hit by Communist mortar fire late on 28 November. [REDACTED] the enemy positions, which were fired upon by US mortars. Enemy losses are unknown.

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4. Units of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division participating in Operation THAYER II in coastal Binh Dinh Province reported killing 17 Viet Cong in scattered actions on 28 November. No American casualties were reported. Since this four-battalion search-and-destroy operation began on 24 October, 414 Communists have been killed, eight captured, and 922 suspects apprehended. American casualties total 45 killed and 209 wounded.

5. Viet Cong guerrillas ambushed a South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) convoy of 17 trucks carrying food supplies near Da Lat in Tuyen Duc Province early on 29 November. A two-hour engagement, which ended when allied reinforcements arrived, resulted in 26 South Vietnamese killed and 26 wounded. Two ARVN vehicles were destroyed and two others damaged. This is the second ambush in a week near Da Lat--an area normally considered secure by the South Vietnamese Government.

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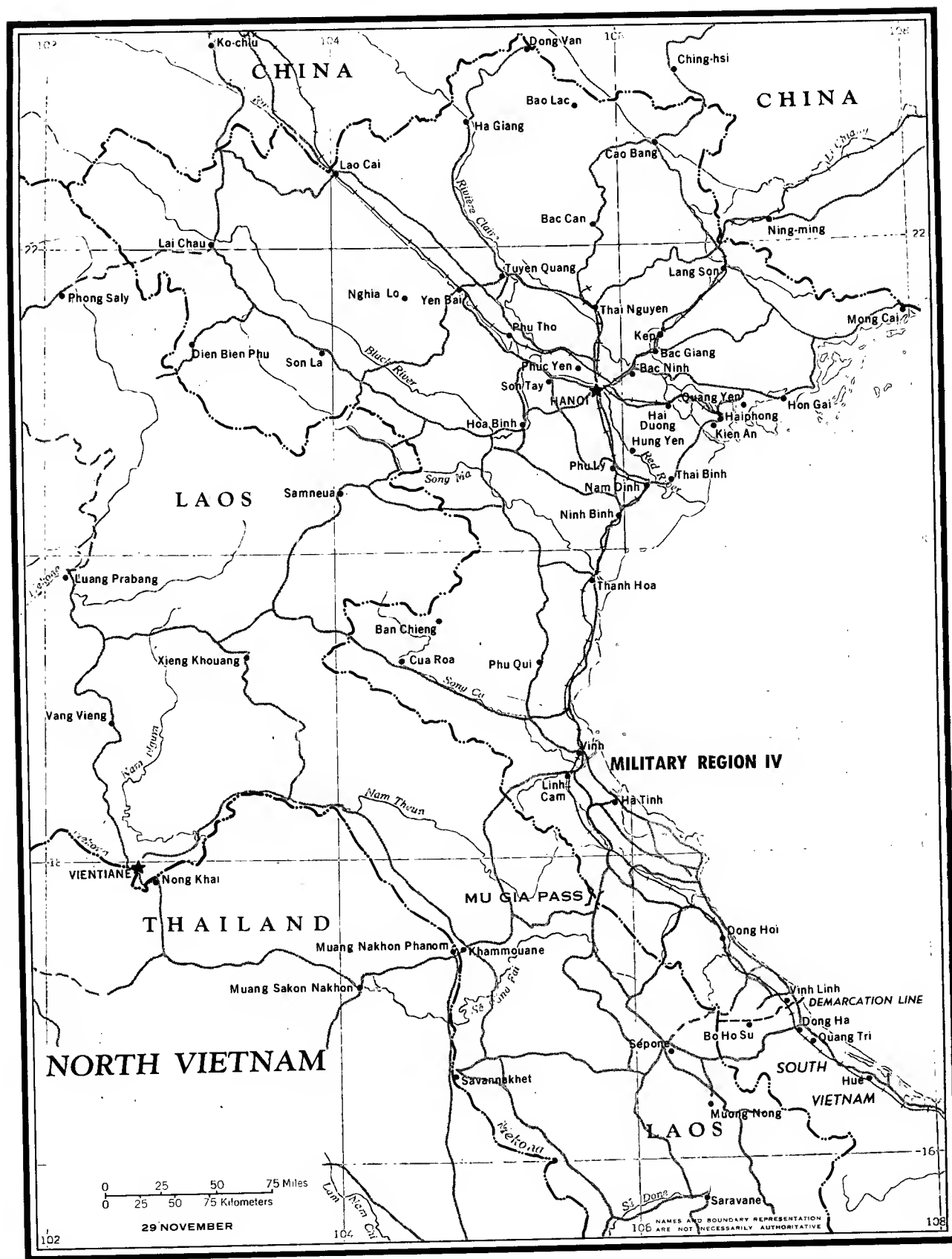
## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Constituent Assembly held its second deliberative session on the basic principles of the constitution on 28 November. In accordance with the agenda, the constitution drafting committee proposed its concept of individual rights and duties. The ensuing debate was inconclusive, and no vote was taken on any of the issues. The committee's version contained 12 basic rights, including freedom of religion and a provision outlawing political participation by religious groups, and four basic duties including a military obligation and a duty to defend Vietnam's republican form of government. During the discussion ethnic minority representatives pressed for the inclusion of special provisions which would protect the customs of the minorities. Hoa Hao deputies objected to the preclusion of religious groups from involvement in politics. A number of other deputies were mainly concerned with defining the conditions and the extent to which basic liberties could be curtailed.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPEMNTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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## V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. An article publicized extensively by the Vietnamese Communists and written under the pseudonym of Cuu Long presents a detailed analysis of the importance currently attached to the role of the guerrilla warfare in the south. It contrasts markedly with the stress placed on regular or mobile tactics by the Vietnamese Communist leadership in South Vietnam as late as July 1966. The success of US spoiling operations over the past year, particularly this summer, may have convinced the Vietnamese Communist leadership that they cannot now successfully challenge the US to large unit combat on a regular basis.

2. The article specifically warns against this latter tactic, describing as an "erroneous concept" the idea of "depending on concentrated troops." It also points out that the guerrilla war is designed as a "protracted resistance," one purpose of which is to tie down enemy forces by making them spread themselves thin. The author warns against those who might favor a purely defensive tactic. He points out that even in guerrilla warfare, the object is continually to attack and harass the enemy. "To pause at the defensive is to invite the danger of being annihilated," the article warns. It points out that "even if we do not attack the enemy, he will attempt to exterminate us."

3. Cuu Long urges greater efforts to develop guerrilla warfare, claiming that its potential is "unlimited." He notes, however, that a number of difficulties face the Communists. For example, he states that there is a need for quickly expanding the number of guerrillas in the south. He implicitly criticizes the move taken in early and mid-1965 by the Viet Cong high command to weaken the guerrillas by moving cadre and men into the ranks of the regular forces.

4. The author concludes that if the Communists properly develop guerrilla forces and coordinate their political and military actions with those of the regular forces (some of which are operating as guerrillas), the enemy could be defeated.

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ANNEX

THE SITUATION IN LONG AN PROVINCE

The US Operations

1. Two companies of the US 25th Division were deployed to Ben Luc town in Long An Province between 21 September and 5 November. From Ben Luc, they operated into fully Viet Cong - controlled areas. In their forays--limited to raids into Viet Cong combat hamlets rather than search-and-destroy operations--the troops labored under a number of handicaps. The terrain was new, much of it was flooded, and supporting aircraft were restricted in their use of suppressing fire to help secure helicopter landing zones.

2. Viet Cong losses during the 45-day period were 14 confirmed killed (plus 26 possible), 24 captured, and 64 suspects detained. The American forces also captured 17 weapons, 326 mines and grenades, 7,000 rounds of ammunition, and 27 tons of rice. The Viet Cong, in turn, killed eight Americans, and wounded 25. In addition, they destroyed eight helicopters and damaged 15 others. The high rate of helicopter losses led the units to discontinue some of their airborne operations.

3. There was no increase in the pace of pacification during the period--two hamlets were "secured" in September and two in October--but the number of Chieu Hoi ralliers showed a marked increase. Whereas the number of returnees in Long An had averaged 42 in June, July, and August, and had dropped to 22 in September, it rose to 87 in October--the largest number ever to rally to the government in the province during a one-month period.

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Long An Geography

4. The terrain in Long An, as in much of the rest of the delta area, works to the advantage of the Viet Cong. The western portion of Long An, which is located in the "Plain of Reeds," is largely marshland, inundated for the greater part of the year and interlaced with irrigation canals and streams. Roads in the area are few and, for the most part, incapable of supporting heavy traffic. Thick vegetation often provides concealment for small guerrilla units. Allied forces, on the other hand, are usually forced to abandon vehicles and rely solely on foot soldiers, boats, and aircraft for military operations in this section of the province.

5. The remainder of Long An is made up primarily of rice fields, which preclude vehicular movement between May and December--the growing season. During the rest of the year, when rice fields are relatively firm, vehicular movement is feasible, but is hampered by earthen dikes between the fields and the large number of canals and streams in the area, many too deep to be forded.

Pacification in Long An

6. Viet Cong documents from Long An admit to certain political and military weaknesses, but the Communists apparently do not feel that these shortcomings are of major significance. A document written in February 1966 on plans for the first half of the year for the local Communist Military Region (variously called MR II and MR VIII), claimed that the allies' pacification plans in both Long An and Dinh Tuong provinces were successfully countered in 1965.

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7. Government records of the results of pacification programs in Long An indicate that the enemy optimism was justified. As of mid-1964 an estimated 17 percent of the province's population was under government control; by May 1966 this figure had increased to only 21.9 percent, and the most recent figures show only 23 percent under government control. The figure for those under Viet Cong control has remained constant since May 1966 at 42.8 percent. The government effort to regain territory from the Communists has also been ineffective. In mid-1964, the government had control over only the provincial and district capitals and a small area surrounding the provincial capital and along National Route 4 --the principal ground link between Saigon and the delta. Even this strategic road was unsafe for travel after darkness, a condition which continues. Apparently few territorial gains have been made over the situation existing in 1964, and a comparison of figures on the number of hamlets secured in late 1965 and in October 1966 shows only a negligible gain. By November 1965, 75 of the province's hamlets, slightly under one third of the total, had been secured. By October 1966 the figure had increased to only 81.

#### Government Representation in Long An

8. A number of factors have contributed to the government's inability to improve the security situation in Long An. For one thing, the government does not have enough Popular Force troops to hold areas which have been cleared by the Regional Forces or by the ARVN. Although revolutionary development teams generally perform well, provincial supervision

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of the cadres is sometimes so lax that whole teams have, on occasion, simply not appeared for their assignments. It would take a major allied ground sweep to even temporarily clear the enemy out of the northwestern corner of the province.

9. Administrative difficulties have also plagued the government in Long An. One of the most pronounced problems has resulted from the fact that two former districts of the province, Duc Hoa and Duc Hue, were taken in October 1963 to create Hau Nghia Province. The Viet Cong still use the old provincial divisions, however, and as a result, enjoy additional freedom of movement in areas near the province border. Government forces are constrained somewhat in their operations by provincial boundaries.

10. Regular government forces in the province include the 46th and the 50th regiments of the ARVN 25th Division and one troop of the 10th Armored Cavalry Squadron. In addition, figures as of January 1966 showed a Regional Force strength of 2,900 and a Popular Force strength of 3,300.

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The Viet Cong

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12. Guerrilla forces are fairly well armed, many with German Mausers and bloc-made weapons, including K-44 carbines. At least one village guerrilla rallier reported in mid-1966 that his squad was armed with seven Soviet CKC semiautomatic carbines, which fire 7.62-mm. rimless short cartridges. This is one of the first reported instances of the use of one of the so-called "new family" of weapons by a guerrilla unit. Militiamen are not as well armed as the guerrillas, but the majority have at least two grenades.

13. The Viet Cong apparently think very highly of their irregulars in Long An. At least one captured document, issued by an officer in a regular unit, praised the guerrillas, and the Third Guerrilla Warfare Conference, held recently in a "liberated area" of South Vietnam, selected Long An--along with Quang Nam Province and Cu Chi District of Hau Nghia Province--for special recognition as the "vanguard banners of the movement." A recent article in North Vietnam's Quan Doi Nhan Dan on guerrilla warfare also specifically mentioned Long An's achievements several times, praising the province's female guerrilla units and giving the province special mention as a "place where guidance was well organized and good preparation for combat was made." The article also praised Long An guerrillas for frustrating "hundreds of pacification and encroachment raids" and for laying the groundwork for local and main force attacks.

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14. In spite of the irregulars' good performance, the Viet Cong in Long An do have some problems, although these are apparently not great enough to hamper seriously Communist military or political operations. The 506th Battalion, for example, has suffered heavy casualties several times in the past year, but has each time been able to find replacements within a short period of time.

15. As of early 1966, Long An had had more Chieu Hoi ralliers than any other province. However, there is little governmental follow-up on the ralliers beyond a six-week reindoctrination program, and it is not known how many go back to the Viet Cong. It should also be noted that in 1965, when more than 200 Viet Cong soldiers defected, an estimated ten percent had formerly been in government units. This would seem to indicate that Viet Cong military proselyting operations in the province are relatively effective in winning over, if not holding onto, government forces.

16. There are some indications that Viet Cong conscriptees in the province are not performing as well as they could; however, the problem apparently is not yet serious enough to have caused the Viet Cong any great difficulties. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] rallied in January 1966, reported that most of his unit was made up of conscriptees who were inexperienced in combat, demoralized, and afraid. When he joined the unit in May 1965, he heard that 40 troops had already deserted, and between May and January, when he left, another 30 deserted. Most of these, however, simply returned home and did not rally to the government.

17. A Viet Cong captive from a local force unit in Long An reported, in addition, that the Communists had had difficulties conscripting youths. In one village, he said, youths ran away in large numbers after a conscription order had been issued and the Viet Cong had to search for them from house to house. They were able to recover 50 but, while being led away, approximately 20 of these escaped.

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Despite the apparently high desertion rates, Communist units in Long An seem to be able to keep up to strength.

Enemy Reaction to the US Presence

18. Little information has been received on the Viet Cong reaction to the presence of US forces in Long An.

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No attacks were launched at the enemy's initiative against the American unit while it was stationed in the province, but the Viet Cong stepped up their attacks and harassing actions outside the American area of operations.

20. The planned shift in 1967 of ARVN units from combat to holding-type operations and the allies' emphasis on Long An as a pilot center for a newly developed pacification plan hopefully will change the situation in the province and work to the disadvantage of the Viet Cong. With the added impetus of a US unit permanently deployed to conduct offensive military operations and to support the pacification effort, the Viet Cong may find that they can no longer rest on their laurels and will have to work harder to hold on to areas which have been theirs for years. Even given the best of circumstances, however, the allies will not find the going easy in Long An.

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